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## RECENT EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSION

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND EDUCATION.—“The Government of the United States is engaged in two distinct kinds of national service. The first is defensive or conservative, the second is creative. Under the defensive service of the Government are properly grouped all those ancient activities relating to the raising of money, the administration of justice, provision for military defense, postal communication, and the adjustment of foreign relations. The agencies which the Government has devised to carry on these activities are agencies of self-preservation. Within the spheres in which they operate they must control absolutely the lives, the property, or the conduct of citizens, else the nation's safety is jeopardized. Back of them lies the full physical force of the Government.

“The second kind of service, the creative service of the Government, is of quite a different character. In it are included those activities designed to foster industrial production, to encourage scientific inquiry, to promote social welfare, and to advance education. Very evidently the sanction behind the Government's promotion of these creative concerns is not force. It is not even the coercive power of subsidies. What is it? It is persuasion. This is proved by reviewing the history of any of the government establishments that deal with these creative interests...

“Why has the Bureau of Education with its insignificant appropriations and its shifting personnel had an influence on American education out of all proportion to its size and resources? Because its task was to investigate and promote, and because it had not administrative powers. Commissioners of education have occasionally desired to change this situation, but it was fortunate for education and for the bureau that they were unable to do so.

“The lesson of the Government's experience in dealing with the creative interests of the nation is plain. These interests flourish if furnished with ideas, intellectual guidance, leadership. They suffer if subjected to control. The ancient policy of non-interference—which probably was adopted and persevered in largely by accident and which was finally altered without full realization of what the alteration entailed—was the right policy.

“By far the greatest and most important creative interest of the

nation is education. What does education need from the Federal Government in the future? It needs three things: unification of the Government's own educational enterprises; studies on a large scale of the educational problems of the country; and leadership. To meet these needs there must be a consolidation of bureaus and offices at Washington and a larger, better supported, more influential establishment that can command the services of the best minds in the country. Whether this establishment should be an independent department, a commission, or a division of a department is of secondary importance—although most of us have our preferences. It is of first importance that the establishment be charged with only those functions which experience has proved are helpful and vitalizing to American education everywhere."

H. B. LEARNED AND S. P. CAPEN,  
in the *Educational Record*.

COLLEGE STUDENTS OF SUPERIOR ABILITY.\*—"How can the opportunities given by the college to students of superior ability be increased?

"There are two groups of persons to whom an effort to solve the problem does not appear important. There are those who have assumed that a 'first-class' person will take care of himself both in college and subsequently. There are also those who appear to believe that everything possible is already being done through the avenue of personal contact of teacher with student. But there are few college teachers who would join either group in thrusting aside an earnest consideration of the subject as an important problem and in refusing to enter upon a more determined effort at solution...

"...The first group thus cannot maintain its position. The second group cannot remain pessimistic concerning possible advances in view of the fact that we have not heretofore made a sustained study of this problem in our colleges. The question is not, 'Can able students be assisted?' but rather, 'What are the ways of assisting them?'

"College teachers have entered upon their careers partially because of the opportunities of developing leadership in young people and thus of rendering to society a great service. There is apparently no more gratifying news to a college faculty than the report of the

\* Compare report of Committee G in the February BULLETIN.